



Garden Troubleshooting Checklist

A simple guide to help you figure out what your plants are trying to tell you

Struggling plants do not always mean you did something wrong. Use this printable checklist to match symptoms to the most likely problem and choose one fix to try today.

Step 1: What Are You Seeing?

Leaves

- ☐ Leaves are drooping
- ☐ Leaves are turning yellow
- ☐ Leaves are curling
- ☐ Leaves have brown crispy edges
- ☐ Leaves have holes
- ☐ Leaves look sticky
- ☐ Leaves have white, gray, or powdery spots
- ☐ Leaves are falling off
- ☐ New leaves look small or weak

Stems and Growth

- ☐ Plant looks tall and weak
- ☐ Plant is growing slowly
- ☐ Plant has stopped growing
- ☐ Stem looks soft or mushy
- ☐ Plant is leaning badly
- ☐ Plant looks crowded by nearby plants

Flowers, Fruits, and Vegetables

- ☐ Flowers are not blooming
- ☐ Flowers are falling off
- ☐ Tomatoes or peppers are not forming
- ☐ Fruit is small or slow to grow
- ☐ Plant has leaves but no flowers
- ☐ Plant started strong but now looks tired

Soil and Pests

- ☐ Soil feels dry two inches down
- ☐ Soil feels wet or soggy
- ☐ Soil has a crusty surface
- ☐ Water runs off instead of soaking in
- ☐ Soil dries out very quickly
- ☐ Tiny insects are visible
- ☐ Bugs are under the leaves
- ☐ Damage seems to appear overnight



Step 2: Match the Symptom to the Likely Problem

Start with the symptom you noticed most. Check the possible causes, then choose one simple fix to try first.

If your plant is drooping

Possible causes:

- ☐ Soil is too dry
- ☐ Soil is too wet
- ☐ Heat stress
- ☐ Roots are crowded
- ☐ Recently transplanted

Try this:

- ☐ Check soil two inches down
- ☐ Water deeply if dry
- ☐ Wait if soil is wet
- ☐ Add mulch
- ☐ Give transplants time to adjust

If leaves are turning yellow

Possible causes:

- ☐ Overwatering
- ☐ Underwatering
- ☐ Poor drainage
- ☐ Lack of nutrients
- ☐ Overcrowding

Try this:

- ☐ Check moisture first
- ☐ Make sure pots drain
- ☐ Remove dead/yellow leaves
- ☐ Improve spacing
- ☐ Add compost or gentle fertilizer if needed

If leaves are curling

Possible causes:

- ☐ Heat stress
- ☐ Inconsistent watering
- ☐ Pests under leaves
- ☐ Too much direct heat
- ☐ Disease

Try this:

- ☐ Look under leaves
- ☐ Water based on soil moisture
- ☐ Add mulch
- ☐ Avoid wet leaves late in day
- ☐ Remove badly damaged leaves

If leaves have holes

Possible causes:

- ☐ Caterpillars
- ☐ Beetles
- ☐ Slugs or snails
- ☐ Chewing pests

Try this:

- ☐ Check morning and evening
- ☐ Look under leaves and stems
- ☐ Hand-pick larger pests
- ☐ Remove badly damaged leaves
- ☐ Use garden-safe treatment only if needed

If leaves are sticky

Possible causes:

- ☐ Aphids
- ☐ Whiteflies
- ☐ Scale insects
- ☐ Sap-sucking pests

Try this:

- ☐ Spray gently with water
- ☐ Check undersides of leaves
- ☐ Wipe small plants
- ☐ Use insecticidal soap if pests continue
- ☐ Recheck every few days

If the plant has leaves but no flowers

Possible causes:

- ☐ Not enough sun
- ☐ Too much nitrogen fertilizer
- ☐ Overcrowding
- ☐ Plant is still young
- ☐ Heat stress

Try this:

- ☐ Track direct sun
- ☐ Move containers if needed
- ☐ Avoid overfeeding
- ☐ Give proper spacing
- ☐ Be patient with young plants



Step 2 Continued: Soil, Sunlight, and Vegetable Problems

If tomatoes or peppers are not producing

Possible causes:

- ☐ Not enough sunlight
- ☐ Extreme heat
- ☐ Inconsistent watering
- ☐ Poor pollination
- ☐ Plant stress

Try this:

- ☐ Make sure plants get full sun
- ☐ Water deeply and consistently
- ☐ Add mulch around the base
- ☐ Avoid drying out then flooding
- ☐ Gently shake flowering plants

If the soil dries out too fast

Possible causes:

- ☐ No mulch
- ☐ Container is too small
- ☐ Poor soil quality
- ☐ Strong afternoon sun
- ☐ Very hot weather

Try this:

- ☐ Add 2 to 3 inches of mulch
- ☐ Water deeply
- ☐ Move pots from harsh afternoon heat
- ☐ Use larger containers when possible
- ☐ Check soil daily during heat waves

If the soil stays wet

Possible causes:

- ☐ Overwatering
- ☐ Poor drainage
- ☐ No drainage holes
- ☐ Compacted soil
- ☐ Not enough sun

Try this:

- ☐ Pause watering until soil dries
- ☐ Check drainage holes
- ☐ Move pots to brighter light
- ☐ Do not let pots sit in water
- ☐ Use better-draining soil next time

If the plant looks weak or crowded

Possible causes:

- ☐ Too many plants in one space
- ☐ Not enough airflow
- ☐ Competition for water and nutrients
- ☐ Weak stems
- ☐ Too little sun

Try this:

- ☐ Thin the weakest plants
- ☐ Move containers apart
- ☐ Prune dead/damaged leaves
- ☐ Add stakes or cages
- ☐ Track real sunlight

Quick Reminder

Most garden problems are easier to fix when you start with the basics.

- ☐ Soil moisture
- ☐ Sunlight
- ☐ Spacing
- ☐ Mulch
- ☐ Pest checks
- ☐ Airflow

Fix It Today

- ☐ Stop watering on a fixed schedule
- ☐ Water at the base of the plant
- ☐ Water in the morning
- ☐ Add mulch
- ☐ Move a container to better light
- ☐ Check under leaves for pests



Step 3: Quick Daily Garden Check

Spend five minutes checking your plants. Catching a small change early can save the whole plant later.

Daily Check

- ☐ Touch the soil before watering
- ☐ Look under the leaves
- ☐ Check for holes, curling, or sticky residue
- ☐ Remove dead or yellow leaves
- ☐ Look for weeds
- ☐ Check if mulch has shifted
- ☐ Make sure plants are not crowded
- ☐ Notice what looks different from yesterday

Weekly Garden Reset

- ☐ Thin overcrowded plants
- ☐ Add mulch where soil is exposed
- ☐ Pull weeds
- ☐ Prune dead or damaged leaves
- ☐ Check plant supports, cages, or stakes
- ☐ Inspect for pests
- ☐ Check containers for drainage
- ☐ Track sunlight if plants are struggling
- ☐ Take a quick progress photo

Notes About My Garden

Plant I am checking:

What I noticed:

What I think the problem might be:

Fix I am trying today:

Date checked:

What changed after a few days?

One small change can make a big difference. Start with water, sunlight, spacing, mulch, and pest checks.